

# First breeding record of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in Libya

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**Première donnée de nidification du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* en Libye.** Un nid abandonné contenant trois œufs du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* a été trouvé en bordure de l'Oasis de Taurgha, Tripolitaine, Libye, le 28 avril 2010. Ceci constitue la première donnée documentée de nidification de cette espèce pour le pays.

In North Africa, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* is known to breed in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (Goodman & Meininger 1989, Isenmann & Moali 2000, Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Isenmann *et al.* 2005). In Libya, breeding was suspected in Cyrenaica, but to date no proof of this has been forthcoming (Bundy 1976, Brehme *et al.* 2002, Gaskell 2005).

On 27 April 2010 we observed two Little Ringed Plovers at the Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania. We initially considered that they must be on passage, but next day one of our Libyan companions found a clutch, in the same place where we had observed the birds, which JH identified as Little Ringed Plover eggs. A check on 29 April revealed that the clutch had been abandoned: the eggs were cold, and after an extended period of observation no adults were seen in the area. The eggs were then collected as evidence and will be deposited in

the Senckenberg Naturhistorische Sammlungen, Dresden, Germany.

The find was made on the western fringe of the oasis in the vicinity of a fenced-off pond (32°31'N 14°26'E; 5 m) several hectares in extent. Salt-loving vegetation *Salicornia* spp. grows in



**Figure 1.** Breeding habitat of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania, Libya, 29 April 2010 (Jens Hering)

Milieu où le nid du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* a été trouvé, Oasis de Taurgha, Tripolitaine, Libye, 29 avril 2010 (Jens Hering)



**Figures 2–3.** Nest of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in a wetland on the western fringe of Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania, Libya, 29 April 2010 (Jens Hering)

Nid du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* dans une zone humide en bordure occidentale de l'Oasis de Taurgha, Tripolitaine, Libye, 29 avril 2010 (Jens Hering)

clumps over the *c.* 800-m<sup>2</sup> salt-encrusted open area (Fig. 1). It is surrounded by small pools fringed by reeds (including *Phragmites australis*, *Typha* spp.) and tamarisks *Tamarix* spp. There are also several wet and open biotopes nearby, as well as a human settlement sited in the shade of the palms. The nest depression, some 10 cm in diameter and lined with small, dead tamarisk twigs, was *c.* 6 m from the nearest vegetation (Figs. 2–3). The basically pale grey eggs possessed a large number of dark grey and blackish-brown spots and speckles. Measurements of the three eggs were 29.75 × 22.10 mm, 29.25 × 22.62 mm and 29.20 × 21.95 mm; these are consistent with morphometrics for Little Ringed Plover eggs in Schönwetter (1963).

We suspect that more Little Ringed Plovers could breed in this area given its many wet biotopes: on 28 April we observed two birds displaying at another wetland *c.* 500 m to the north-east. The species probably also breeds at other suitable locations in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, with a similar distribution to that in neighbouring Tunisia and Algeria, where it is a migrant breeder in areas of permanent fresh or brackish water (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

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